

LOW VALUE ON LAND

Fifty Dollars an Acre is a High Price.

(From Saturday's daily.)

Five and fifty dollars an acre was the range of value placed by the government witnesses on the Bishop Estate land condemned for the Pearl Harbor naval station yesterday. The returns of the trustees to the tax assessor indicate an even less valuation—three dollars an acre and the highest price given yesterday is one-twelfth, that asked by the respondents. Probably the most interesting feature of the day was the ruling of the court, that the Hawaiian law fixed the value of property taken by condemnation, at not more than twenty per cent in excess of the assessed valuation. The ruling was qualified however by the statement that the court would construe this law very liberally and allow evidence by the defendant to counteract such valuation.

Even from the government witnesses the Bishop Estate attorneys drew some admissions of a much greater value in similar sugar lands in the Ewa basin, though they stuck obstinately to their valuation of not to exceed fifty dollars an acre, on the condemned land. The low valuation of \$12,496 placed upon the land by the trustees was sought to be counteracted by the showing that it was the general practice to value lands at eight times the annual rental. Later a lease is to be introduced showing that the Dowsett Estate has a long lease for \$900 a year, and is responsible for taxes upon the value of that lease. The valuation at eight times the rental value would have been but \$7,200 for the land, or less than the amount returned. The valuation of \$12,496 is upon over 4,000 acres, including the six hundred acres in dispute.

Dr. J. S. McGrew was the first witness for the government yesterday morning. He qualified as an expert, by stating that he had lived here thirty-six years and had visited Pearl Harbor about twice a week. "I think the piece of land mauka of the railroad is worth about five dollars an acre," said the witness. "It is mostly lava rock with little soil, and I don't believe it is worth that much, except to the United States government." McGrew thought some of the cane land was worth fifty dollars an acre, but he declined to put a valuation on cane land generally. The witness on cross-examination said he did not know of any sales of cane land at fifty dollars an acre within the past five years. The doctor thought that lands that were of very little value before, suddenly increased in value with annexation. "Annexation brought stability," he said, "the boom values of lands are going down again now. I don't think we are going to have any more booms in sugar. We are getting too many new possessions where sugar can be raised."

FIVE DOLLARS AN ACRE.

George E. Boardman, the second land expert put on the stand by the government, did not have even as rosy a view of the condemned property as did Dr. McGrew. Five dollars an acre was all he thought it was worth, but with the whiff of the raised his figures to \$20 to \$25 an acre.

"The land is rocky," said this witness, "much stone was taken from it for use as ballast by the railroad. As a speculation by a private individual I would consider \$5 an acre throwing away money for the land on the right of the railroad. I have visited the main body of land and been around it on a launch. The water-front certainly enhances its value, but I consider \$20 to \$25 an acre a good price, with the water privileges. I wouldn't give anything for it for grazing. Years ago I intended to promote a sugar plantation down here, and I planned it, but found the land to be valueless for that purpose."

On cross-examination witness said he wouldn't give \$5 an acre for the land without the waterfront, which he thought was about half a mile in length. On re-direct examination he said that this was only guesswork. (The respondent alleged that there is nearly three miles of waterfront.)

ASSESSMENT FIGURES.

The introduction of the assessment blanks filed by the Bishop estate for the past four years brought about an interesting legal fight, in which Judge Estee delivered an opinion upon some of the vexing law points in the case. Mr. Kinney objected to the introduction of these taxation figures, unless he was allowed to show by the assessor that the law permitted the return of property at eight times the rental value, and that the property in question was under long lease to the Dowsett estate for \$900 a year. The court refused to allow testimony on this point, holding that all the law points involved would be explained by him in the instructions to the jury at the conclusion of the evidence. He asked that each attorney submit to him by Monday a copy of the instructions they desired.

In passing upon the question of law Judge Estee said: "The statutes here provide that in cases of land condemned the jury cannot fix the value of the property at more than 20 per cent in excess of the assessed value. I am inclined to be liberal in this matter, however, and will allow the respondent to bring in whatever evidence he may wish to show the value of the land. The court rules that the defendant cannot introduce any testimony showing that the assessments or lists returned to the assessor were not made in accordance with law. At present, the court cannot instruct the jury as to the law."

Assessor Pratt then identified the tax return introduced by the Bishop estate, and showed the valuation upon the 4,326 acres at Halawa, which included the 600 acres condemned by the government, to have been \$11,000. In 1898



Stocks during the past week were exceptionally dull and there was little doing in the Stock Exchange. Quotations of the past week generally prevailed. There were a few sales of Oahu Sugar at 95, Ewa at 24 and Kihai at 10.

There is a general increased activity in building circles, as the following notes on buildings in course of erection indicate.

Hawaiian Hotel annex buildings, facing on Alakea street. Architect Traphagen reports that the two wings will be completed by the end of next week. They are handsomely finished inside and the clock which connects them with the main building is a novelty in local architecture.

The Punahou Preparatory School, on the Oahu College grounds, is up to the third story and presents a solid, handsome appearance. The walls are being constructed of concrete. The building being on a terrace will be a commanding structure and a valuable addition to the college.

The Lewers & Cooke building on King street near Alakea, has its foundation piers ready, and Contractor Amweg now has a large force of men working on the floors. Beneath a layer of black volcanic sand nearly two feet deep the sand is being scraped off the coral bed rock and turned into a heap to be used for building purposes. The concrete flooring will be about eighteen inches thick and is so durable that the water pressure beneath will not be sufficient to do any damage to it. A feature of the draining of the excavation is an electric pump which discharges 12,000 gallons of water per hour. The pump takes up very little room and does not need constant attention.

Traphagen is busy with the plans for the new Old Fellows' Building, corner of Fort street and Chaplain lane. They will be ready in a short time for inspection by contractors.

Figures are being sent in to the architect for the construction of the new Waity Building on King street opposite the Advertiser office.

Work is rapidly progressing on the Hall building, heavy beams and joists being set in position for the second floor.

The handsome Hackfeld building is in the finishing stages of completion. The scaffolding has been removed from the building, and the plastering is practically completed.

The new Mendocino buildings in old Chinatown, covering large portions of two separate blocks between King and Pauahi streets, are about completed.

The stone front work on the Young Building has reached the third story, and more iron work will be done shortly. One of the third story panels is already in.

The new building Ewa of the Ellice block is receiving its street facing of cement and will be quite attractive when completed. A portion will be completed as early as practicable as several intending tenants desire to get in before the Christmas trade is over.

The Sachs building at the corner of Fort and Beretania streets is going up rapidly. The interior wood work to the second story is completed, although little has been done on the street walls.

Everything is in readiness to commence cementing the Fort street front of the new Catholic Convent. All the plastering is finished.

NO INCREASE IN SUGAR TAX.

LONDON, Nov. 16.—A stir has been created by the rumor that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer, would impose another tax of a half penny per pound on sugar, although inquiries have resulted in discrediting the probability of any such action. It is an unwritten rule of the Treasury that no industry shall be tampered with two years running, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach is not likely to break through hard and fast traditions, however hard pushed he may be for funds to carry on the war. Nevertheless the rumor has brought to light a curious condition of affairs, which would certainly favor the Government should it decide to take the step, despite the tax imposed by the last budget. The British consumer is now buying sugar more cheaply than before the tax was imposed. This is due chiefly to a sugar trust is causing the British sugar trade the keenest apprehension. "The German trust will form one of the chief topics of the sugar conference which is to meet in Brussels December 14th."

Though the United States Government has not been invited to send a delegate to the conference, it is learned that it could be represented if it so desired, and one of the leading authorities on sugar in England is now endeavoring to secure the attendance of American delegates at the meeting in Brussels.

Until after the conference, it can be definitely stated, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach will not take any action, and then it is improbable that he will run the risk of further disintegrating the business, which, on all sides, it is declared, would be in a sorrowful plight.

Replying to a correspondent, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach said the coal tax would be continued next year, but intimated that it would not be increased. This will take a load off the minds of British coal miners, who have been especially exercised over the inroads American coal has made on the Continent.

The Cabinet appears to have awakened from its lethargy to such unexpected energy as to elicit from the Gazette the following comment: "The strict application to business is highly to be commended and will be appreciated."

This unintentional admission of the Cabinet's previous business has caused the statement that the various committees of the Cabinet, sitting this week, will formulate proposals for the reform of procedure in the House of Commons. The proposals will be considered by the full Cabinet next week. It is pretty generally admitted that there is crying need of such a step as domestic legislation is almost hopelessly blocked.

Parliament, it is expected, will reassemble January 23d.

And 1900 the return was signed by J. O. Carter as treasurer of the Bishop estate, and he listed the same 4,326 acres for those years at \$12,496. In 1901 the same property was returned by F. S. Dodge as land agent at \$12,496, but the deputy assessor at Ewa raised the assessment to \$20,000. From this the Bishop estate filed notice of appeal, and Assessor Pratt testified that he refused to receive it, because the return had not been sworn to, and sent back a request that the trustees consult the assessor at Ewa for a compromise. Subsequently this was done, and the assessment was agreed upon for the present year at \$20,000.

On cross-examination, Mr. Pratt stated that he had a record of some of the leases in his office, but did not know whether the property in question was now under lease to the Dowsett estate for \$900 a year. Court adjourned at this point until afternoon.

In the afternoon the examination of Mr. Pratt was continued by Mr. Kinney. He was not allowed to answer the question as to whether the Dowsett estate was paying taxes on that property. The court ruling that the amount of taxes paid made no difference in the value of the land.

P. K. Archer, deputy assessor for the district of Ewa and Waiānae, was the next witness, and testified that he had been holding that office for six years, and was consequently acquainted with land values at Pearl Harbor. He thought \$5 an acre a fair valuation for the land on the east of the railroad, while that on the west side of it was worth \$20 an acre. On cross-examination, he said that the average rental for cane land of that nature was from \$7.50 to \$10 an acre. He admitted, however, that he knew of a lease by Sam Damon of a large tract of cane land to the Honolulu Sugar Company for \$20 an acre, within the past few months. Small tracts of land, he said, brought \$25 to \$30 an acre. He thought the value of the Damon land to be about \$50 an acre.

A. Herbert, another expert, was next called. He said he obtained his knowledge of cane lands from experience, and the fact that he was a time Commissioner of Agriculture. He said he had shot birds over the land in question 25 years ago, and had visited it a few months ago again. When Mr. Dunne asked whether his examination was sufficient for him to make an estimate as to the value, he said it was not. The witness was then recalled from the stand, and requested to make an examination before Monday, and testify at that time.

Captain Pond was next called. He testified that he was the agent for the government in the negotiations for the purchase of the land, but had been unable to come to an agreement as to the price. His description of the land was very full and complete, but was largely technical, giving in detail the general lay and character of the land. He did not think Kihai Island was of much value for commercial purposes, on account of its height.

"The island is five feet above the sea-level," said the witness, "and there would have to be an immense amount of grading through solid stone for the wharves. I should say the island is decidedly inferior for commercial purposes. The present condition of the harbor makes it impossible for a vessel drawing more than 10 feet to get to the island, because of the shoal water over the bar."

The examination of Lieutenant Commander Pond was not finished when court adjourned.

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Li's Relatives Honored.

PEKING, Nov. 17.—The Empress Dowager has issued another edict eulogizing the late Li Hung Chang and ordering the erection of a memorial arch near his birthplace. The edict also directs that the rank of Marquis, conferred upon the eldest son of the late Chinese statesman in his own right, shall descend through twenty-three generations. It confers high rank upon the other sons of Earl Li, upon whom the posthumous rank of Marquis has been bestowed, and confers dignities upon his grandsons, together with lucrative offices.

The steamer Maui will sail for Paauhau, Okaia, Kakaia and Papeaia today. She has a full load of fertilizer, bales of bags and feed on board for these plantations. She will also take a lot of machinery for the plantation at Puako.

W. O. SMITH RETURNS

His Narrow Escape From Railway Wreck.

Hon. W. O. Smith returned yesterday in the Alameda from a visit to Boston, New York, Washington and Chicago, and on his return to the Pacific Coast narrowly escaped death in a train wreck. He intended going over the Santa Fe railway to Los Angeles but in endeavoring to get his ticket changed from the Northwestern to the southern line, he found it could not be done. This train crashed into another passenger train at Frankfort, Arizona, and a scene of horror followed. Many were killed and scalded to death, although the passengers in the Pullman car, were only badly shaken up, but their lives were in jeopardy for some time after the accident.

With reference to his visit to Washington and interview with President Roosevelt in company with J. B. Atherton and F. M. Swanzy of Honolulu, and R. P. Hiltner of San Francisco, Mr. Smith said last evening:

"President Roosevelt was extremely affable and came from his inner room to meet us. He talked earnestly of Hawaiian affairs and expressed a great deal of interest in local politics. His knowledge of our politics was full and accurate. He asked some questions about the population and labor situation, and spoke of the relations of Cuba and the United States touching the tariff, and while I would not attempt to quote what he said my impression is that he believed the Chinese Exclusion act would be re-enacted, and that some concessions would have to be made to Cuba or something done for that island and so far as the sugar tariff is concerned."

"Mr. Roosevelt spoke to us in the clear, forceful and direct way so characteristic of him. He showed a great deal of interest in the prosperity of Hawaii."

"He spoke of his earnest desire and determination that only upright men should be appointed to office here."

"The President asked about the different kinds of laborers we had, and information was given including the facts relating to the introduction of Porto Ricans. He wanted to know if more Portuguese laborers could not be procured from the Madeira Islands, intimating that they were valuable laborers."

"Mr. Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, spoke very earnestly about the islands in my conversation with him. He talked freely about our affairs, and evidently was very well informed about matters here. Secretary Cooper, in his recent visit, evidently gave a great deal of information about the islands, which has been valuable to the Interior Department. He expressed a desire to do everything he could for the benefit and prosperity of Hawaii. He made some inquiries in regard to water rights and utilizing water on public lands. Our call upon Secretary Gage was brief as he had just returned from a journey and was quite tired."

"As to the Mackay cable, the dispatches of course tell that the contract had been let for laying it to the Hawaiian Islands and that it would be here within the next year, and possibly by September. I did not hear whether an inter-island cable system would also be installed."

"There is a very strong feeling on the Pacific Coast in favor of the re-enactment of the Geary Exclusion Act, while at the same time with many people there, there is a great deal of opposition to the re-enactment. In the East there is a very strong sentiment against its re-enactment. My impression is that there will be important modifications of the original law."

"There are a great many exaggerated reports on the mainland of the political situation here. From reports that have been current, Governor Dole is always about to resign and he is likely to drop off suddenly or something of that sort. However, at Washington these reports do not cause any comment. They know about our affairs in detail."

"Among those who will return on the China will be about a dozen of the Hawaiian singing boys from the Buffalo exposition. Also Paul Isenberg, Frank Baldwin and wife, Mrs. Cunha and family. The singing boys I saw at the Occidental Hotel where Mrs. James Campbell gave an entertainment."

Poi is Rotting.

Economy is needed just now, but the Board of Health is rather overdoing the thing by allowing 12,000 pounds of poi to rot on the Kahului wharf for lack of means to transport it to the leper settlement on Molokai, leaving the inmates of Kalaupapa to go hungry or starve in the meantime. Proper transportation should at once be provided, even if a steamer has to be bought or chartered for that purpose. No dependence can be put in sailing vessels for this purpose, and immediate steps should be taken to promptly ship the poi to the settlement.—Maui News.

Bats at the Granary.

It would seem that after the miserable fiasco of the last legislature, the Home Rule Republicans would not insist so strenuously as they do for an extra session. Better wait for another session and select such men as Kahe of Maui and Brown of Hawaii, and then we will have a legislature able and willing to enact proper laws. Deliver us from the grabbing mob that disgraced the Islands during the last lamented session of the legislature.—Maui News.

NEW YORK, Nov. 21.—According to the Journal and Advertiser, the formal announcement of the engagement of Miss Kathleen Neilson and Reginald Vanderbilt will be made as soon as his mother, Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, returns to the city.

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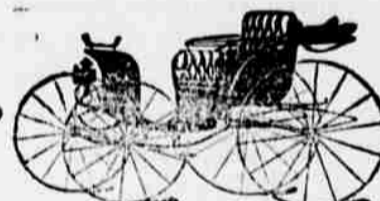
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PERU	DEC. 26	PEKING	DEC. 27
COPTIC	JAN. 4	GAELIC	JAN. 3
AMERICA MARU	JAN. 11	HONGKONG MARU	JAN. 11
PEKING	JAN. 18	CHINA	JAN. 20
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